

Pure Worship

after God's Own Heart

PART 1

King David laid out much of the Old Testament's rituals for worship, contributing vastly to the book of Psalms, whose words songwriters are still using today. Within a few centuries though, God had to rebuke His people through Isaiah (29:13) for worshipping Him with their lips, but not with their hearts; something which Jesus also did during his ministry. 3000 years after David, the Church would do well to take these words to heart.

When the gospel of the cross began to take root in churches of the CTMI Network, worship soon began to reflect a true expression of a relationship with Jesus Christ. God's people started to understand that genuine and sincere worship could only be centred on Him alone and come from a pure heart. Anything else is in fact only entertainment of the emotions, led by talented musicians playing good music! David is not commended for being a songwriter, or worship leader; he is known as a man 'after God's own heart'! Today, it would appear that many involved in praise and worship try to emulate David's use of his talents; they appear unaware of the fact that they actually need to have the same attitude of heart he had in his relationship with God.

"Praise and worship is not to find favour with, or even try to attract God's attention and get Him to do

things for us. The whole purpose of worship is for man to be free to express his gratitude and appreciation for all that He has done; to enjoy His presence and acknowledge Him for who He is. Music and songs should just be the vehicle to facilitate this process - instead they have become the point of focus!" Peter McKenzie – Pastor, UK.

As in all things where there is a potent mix of emotions, talents, pride, and showmanship, extremes become possible very quickly. Some churches today have made a doctrine out of music and worship, while others demand 'excellence of ministry' from the worship team: smart matching outfits, perfect music, immaculate and expensive sound and systems, etc.; which can best be described as 'works, law, and human efforts'. Others have music departments independent of church leadership and its oversight, often because they are a cash cow for the church... Whether it is in the 'developed' West, or in Africa and Asia, worship has developed a trend of its own, and appears to be something quite detached from how God sees it.

So, while praise and worship remains an 'internal' issue to the Church - in other words, not something necessarily seen by the outside world - the heart that produces that worship, the right motivation, the right attitude, and the music that results, will have an impact

on the world. Christians rejoice that 'Gospel' songs are in the pop charts; the name of the Lord is profaned by being played in nightclubs, where drinks, drugs and immorality are rife; worldly beats, rhythms, costumes and dances accompany sacred words; church services in some places are very hard to distinguish from rock concerts, complete with fireworks, lasers and flashing lights; Christian rock, hip hop, rap, reggae... what's next? *"The world has invaded the Church,"* says Miki Hardy. *"It is urgent that its leaders react and look at worship with a different, Godly, perspective!"*

In John 4, Jesus describes how we will be privileged to worship God 'in spirit and in truth' through the salvation that would come to us, the Church. The 'time' he referred to was the time of His death on the Cross, which would open the way for a new and different way of worshipping God in freedom and with a pure heart. A price was paid to allow us to worship our Creator in this way! *"He wasn't talking to the Samaritan woman as a worship leader; he was revealing the heart of the Father for His Church."*

Eugene Nyathi – Pastor & Songwriter, Zimbabwe.

Jesus taught us to love God with all our being. And it is only by identifying our lives with His sufferings, His death and His resurrection – the preaching of the Cross – that we will be in a position to

worship Him according to God's heart.
"True worship is simply the fruit of a life lived on the road of the cross"
Roland La Hausse – Elder, Mauritius.

Many musicians seem to confuse their God-given talents and skills as something for their personal advantage and benefit and glory, forgetting that, like all gifts given to the Church, it is to encourage His people to worship Him. It is the surrendered and given life led by the musicians which pleases God and opens the door for that talent to take its rightful place in the church.
"I am sure the Lord delights in a beautiful sound... but I'm convinced He prefers a horrible sound coming from a clean and pure heart!"
Vanessa Fitzroy – Singer, Mauritius; to which adds Jonathan Hett – Violinist, Mauritius: *"When I joined the music group, I quickly realised that my ability was not the most important thing; rather, it was my life, surrendered on the altar, during the week!"*

True worship is clearly not a Sunday-morning only activity. All Christians are called to demonstrate, out of daily gratitude, a heart of worship as an expression of their faith. At the same time, true prayer and worship can only be an expression of what we carry in our heart; if there is nothing there, we will have to pretend.
David's psalms are a continuous

expression of his relationship with God. There is no aspect of his life that is not open to the Lord's intervention. He describes God as his rock, his refuge, his shelter, his help, his strength... the One who listens to, and hears, his cries and his prayers. With that type of relationship, it is evident that David could write and sing the psalms he did.

2 Chronicles 29:27 states: *'As the offering began, singing to the Lord began also...'* Clara Grant – Singer, Mauritius, relates her experience of a period of spiritual emptiness, and hardness in her heart towards God thus: *"I was singing because I knew the words, but my worship was absolutely dead. Yet, as soon as I surrendered everything and was willing to take my cross and follow Jesus in that situation, the worship poured out from a broken spirit."*

Worship, then, is not a compartment of the Christian's life, opened up for Sunday mornings on the platform with the rest of the music team. It is the highest expression of his surrender to God as it involves all his being... As the Spirit leads, our voices sing, our hands clap, our feet move... we find great satisfaction in drawing near to God's throne and His presence. We worship our God not only through music, but by offering our talents and gifts, our time, our finances, our service, and our very lives to Him in total surrender.

To be continued...

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